

met. These initiatives have never won the approval of the House.

Yesterday, we were slated to vote on amendment to the foreign operations appropriations bill that threatened to reduce development assistance to India under the Agency for International Development by 25 percent.

I rose in opposition to this amendment.

As in the past, my colleague cited human rights abuses in India as the reason for his legislative initiative. While human rights abuses have been uncovered in India, it is important to note the significant progress India has made in resolving human rights problems, as noted in the State Department's human rights report on India.

In Punjab the serious abuses of the early 1990's were acknowledged and condemned by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court delegated responsibility for investigation of these abuses in the Punjab to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), whose investigation continues. Prison visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Jammu and Kashmir are another example of government transparency.

India is addressing its human rights problems because it is a democracy—the world's largest. Although the country has confronted many challenges since gaining independence in 1947, it has stayed true to its founding principles. India is a model for other nations that are still striving to build civil societies, institutionalize democratic values of free expression

and religion, and find strength in the diversity of their land and their people.

All this sets India favorably apart from other countries all over the world. It is incomprehensible to me why my colleague chose to single out the country that is particularly well prepared to address its human rights problems—and has shown the willingness to do so.

It is also incomprehensible to me why we would jeopardize the development assistance provided by the Agency for International Development. This development assistance is essentially humanitarian aid. Withholding this aid would have punished the same people his ill-conceived amendment sought to protect. Access to adequate nutrition, shelter, and education—the objective of our aid to India—is a human right as well.

It is for these reasons that I spoke in opposition to the Burton amendment last night. I am glad that my colleague withdrew his amendment in light of the overwhelming opposition he faced.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, August 3, 1999*

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall votes Nos. 360, 361, and 362, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would

have voted "aye" on No. 360; "no" on No. 361; and "aye" on No. 362.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, August 3, 1999*

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent on a matter of critical importance and missed the following rollcall votes:

On the amendment to H.R. 2606 by the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. TANCREDO, regarding the reduction of funding for international organizations, specifically UNESCO, I would have voted "nay."

On the amendment to H.R. 2606 by the gentleman from Texas, Mr. PAUL, to prohibit the use of funds in the bill for international population control or family planning activities, I would have voted "nay."

On the amendment to H.R. 2606 also by the gentleman from Texas, Mr. PAUL, to prohibit the export-import bank, the overseas private investment corporation or the trade and development agency from entering into new obligations, I would have voted "nay."

Finally, Mr. Speaker on final passage of H.R. 2606, the foreign operations appropriations, I would have voted "yea."